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THE INNOCENTS

A Legend of War-Time

BY ALFRED MACHARD

With 48 Sketches by POULBOT



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THE INNOCENTS

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A LEGEND OF WAR-TIME

BY
ALFRED MACHARD

WITH FORTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY

POULBOT
OF "THE KIDDIES IN THE RUINS"

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
Mrs RODOLPH STAWELL

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO
MCMXVIII

“ In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”

ST MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.



*To Sorrowing Mothers
who have been crucified by the War,
and kneel, evening by evening,
weeping beside a little empty bed,
Two men
hope,
by uniting their arts in these humble pages,
to which they have given
the deepest feelings of their hearts,
to bring
a little human comfort.*



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I

THE TERROR
BY NIGHT

NIGHT has fallen. The whole *faubourg* smells of soup. . . . The stars are scarcely visible in the moonless sky, which is still



THE INNOCENTS

darkened by clouds of smoke, rolling slowly from the factory chimneys.

In the huge building where the workmen live, the gloomy staircase is a meeting-place for all the sounds common to human life of the humbler sort. On the second floor a woman is singing. Her song—the refrain of a popular ballad—comes floating down a long corridor, and is intended to drown, or soothe, the wail of a baby. Higher up, upon the seventh floor, there is a sound of hammering. Père Labille is mending shoes.

Everyone in this house, it would seem, is hungry! From basement to attic can

THE TERROR BY NIGHT



be heard the rattle of spoons, eagerly scraping the last morsel from the dish.

The woman's singing has ceased.

Her thin voice had broken into song in

THE INNOCENTS

the hope of stilling the baby's miserable wailing. "I'll never quiet him, that's certain ! . . . The factory's wearing me out, and my milk is no good at all !" An unskilled but enthusiastic musician is puffing at an ocarina on the fourth floor, while on the first some urchins are raising shrill demands for "some bread !" to the tune of the *Lampions*. But a loud, surly voice answers in the same rhythm : "Rations ! Rations !"

Who can be grinding coffee so vigorously ? . . . A man, obviously asthmatic, climbs the stairs slowly. His laboured breathing is plainly audible, and the hand-rail shakes under the clutch of his strong clenched hand. Madame Bien, the concierge, is dis-

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

tributing the letters. Clack ! . . . Clack ! . . .



Doors are opened. Women's voices ask anxiously : “ Is there a letter from my *poilu* ? ”

THE INNOCENTS

From the far distance, from the other side of the city, through the stillness of the night, there comes a sound. Surely it was the sound of a gun ?

*“ Fais dodo, Poulet, mon p’tit frère,
Fais dodo, t’auras du lolo . . . ”*

sings, on the third floor, a little girl of five : dear little Fifi, who is gravely “ playing the mother ” to the doll in her arms.

“ I tell you I heard a gun fired ! ” Good old Père Labille whistles the homesick air of “ Tipperary ” with all his might, in time to the strokes of his mallet.

Hoo-oo-oo ! . . . Hoo-oo-oo-oo ! There is a sudden hooting of sirens in the distance.

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

Boom ! . . . Boom ! . . . Boom !

Towards the east invisible guns are barking.

Suddenly—ah, how suddenly!—every sound in the house is hushed. . . . What a silence !

Madame Bien, the concierge, who has just returned to her lodge, reappears with a face of horror.



Making a funnel of her hands, she shouts : “Here are the Gothas ! Come down ! They are coming . . . they are coming ! The Gothas !”

Instantly the silence is succeeded by

THE INNOCENTS

noisy confusion. A thousand hurrying feet hammer upon the resounding boards. Doors are banging everywhere : the long passages echo with exclamations : and dim oil-lamps, held aloft by anxious mothers, make shadows on the walls — the monstrous, distorted shadows of children swarming in haste to the staircase.

“Here they come ! . . . It’s the Gothas ! . . . Down with you !”

Boom . . . boom . . . boom . . .

Appollonie Trimouille jostles against Bout-de-Bibi : Trinité Thélémaque is riding on Pancucule’s back. Trinité announces proudly : “I am Jeanne Hachette !” At this moment, flashing past like three meteors,

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

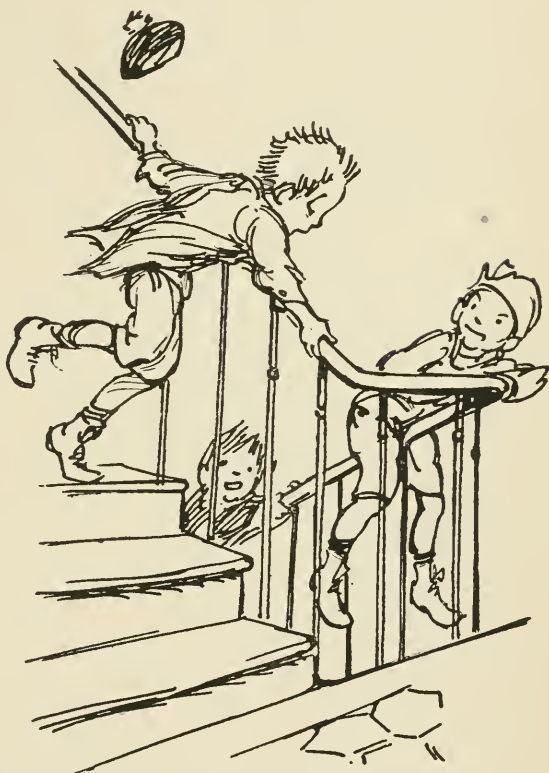
Justaféré, Barbagna, and Rossignol slide down the banister. The women at the top of the stairs yell with terror.

“You young limbs ! Can’t you behave yourselves ? ”

But the “young limbs” answer irreverently :

“Who cares ? We’ll have a lark anyway . . . the *godasses* are coming ! ”

Stéphanie Lacourbette, Amélie Gaimin, and Marie Médard are good girls : they help the mothers to bring down the tiny ones. As



THE INNOCENTS

for Père Labille, he is carrying his shoes. He holds his head high, and has begun whistling again. But the tune is different. It is now a sentimental love-song: “*Quand les papillons reviendront sur les roses . . .*”

Hoo-oo-oo-oo ! . . . Hoo-oo-oo ! . . .

The wandering sirens are now hooting close at hand.

“Be quick, children, be quick!”

Boom . . . boom . . . boom . . .

The guns, now, are firing ceaselessly.

“Hurry up, children! Hold your little brother tight, Marie! . . . Why is Nénette crying? Ah—how they bang!”

Boom . . . boom . . .

“That’s Mont Valérien!”

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

Hoo-oo-oo-oo !

"I assure you, Mâme Lamirte, that I heard the crash of a bomb! . . . Keep quiet, all of you! . . . My word, one can't hold them. . . . These *sacrés* chips of the old block, they're afraid of nothing!"

Boom . . . boom . . .

"It's the barrage-fire!"

Fizzzz . . . crack!

"Ah, *mon Dieu* . . . this time there's no doubt . . . it's a bomb! . . . Quick—



THE INNOCENTS

to the cellar! The cellar, children! The cellar—quick!”

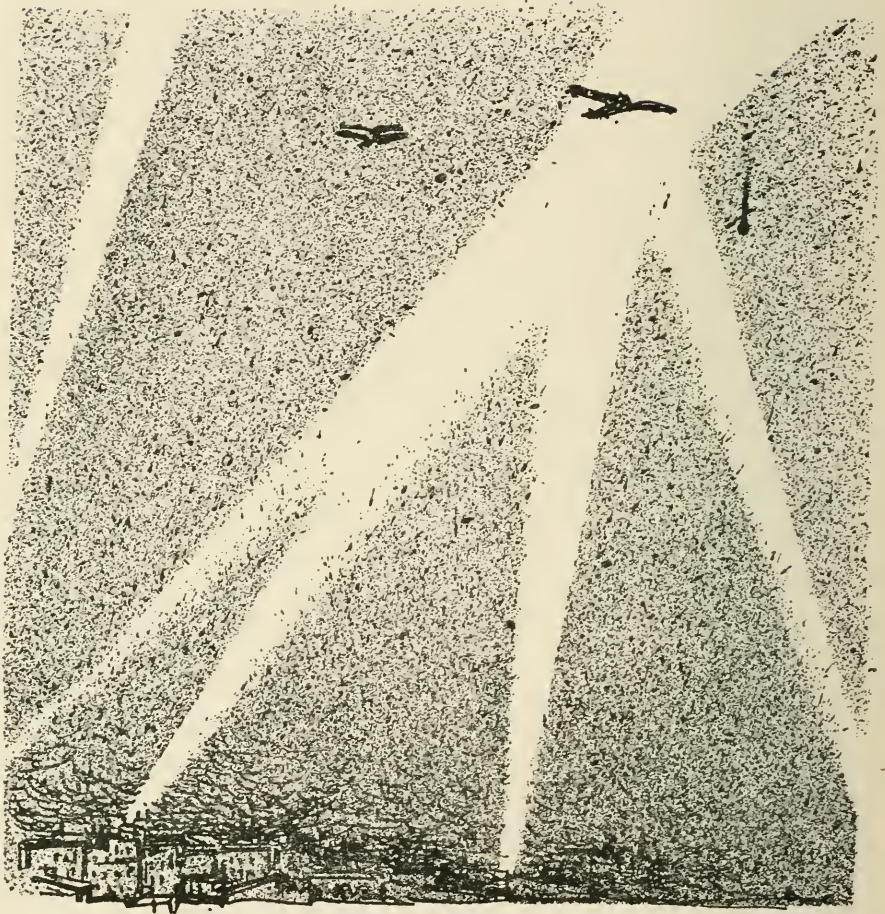


THE TERROR BY NIGHT

IN THE AIR

“I THINK, Fritz, we must be over Paris now?”

“*Ja*, Werner . . . we are above Paris.



IN THE AIR, 10,000 FEET UP.

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

Half the good work is gombled . . . bot
I wish I was home again."

"Art thou avraid, Fritz ? "

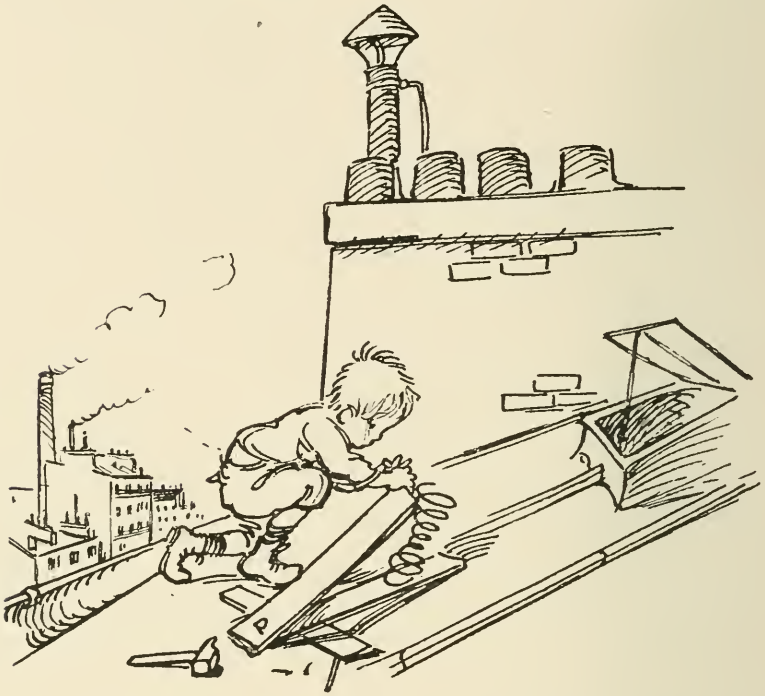
"*Nein*, but one knows not vot vill
happen. . . . It was hard to get here . . .
it vill be hard to get back. And, Werner,
thou must know that in two days, after this
raid, I am to go on leave."

"*Verstehe!* I understand! *Verstehe!*"

"And then, Werner, I am longing my
gemüthlich wife to see. Heaven has just
given me a child . . . a son, Werner . . .
a vine poy ! How I long to kiss my poy
. . . oh, Werner !"

.

THE INNOCENTS



Two little shadows climb the stairs in haste.

“We must hurry, my old Radish. They are banging all over the place. They are over Paris, and no mistake !”

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

“ I say, Campistron, do you think our mothers never saw us when we made off from the cellar ? ”

“ Don’t disturb yourself, Radish ; they noticed nothing.”

“ That’s all right . . . oh, *là-là* ! did you hear that ? *Mince*, what a crash ! It must be a torpedo . . . let’s be quick ! I must climb on your back and get to the roof through the skylight on the seventh storey. Then I’ll help you up after me, Campistron, old



THE INNOCENTS

chap! I fixed it up there the other day, my machine — you'll see. It'll catch the Boches right enough! There's a plank as big as that—with a spiral spring under it—you lean on the plank, you see, and the spring goes down flat—you put some marbles at the end of the plank and then you let go! Ah, Campistron, old chap, how the marbles fly into the air! *Bing*—straight at the Boches—and their engine will be spoilt. . . . Here we are, Campistron: let me get on your back. Steady! A little bit higher! It's all right, I'm up! . . . Now it's your turn, Campistron; catch hold of the end of my belt. . . . Hold tight, Campistron. . . . Are you all right? Then up with you!"

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

A little girl who has slipped furtively from the cellar shivers in an agony of fear. She sobs :

“My dolly . . . oh dear ! . . . my dolly . . .”

She too climbs the dark staircase, but very slowly. Her little hand clutches wildly at the rails of the banister, for her trembling limbs can hardly carry her. And the iron tips of her shoes, striking upon the worn steps, awake the echoes.

“My dolly . . . my little dolly,” wails the child.

Boom . . . boom . . . bang !

Some bombs burst quite close at hand.

The house trembles.

THE INNOCENTS

The little girl, in terror, drops upon her knees.

“ *Maman !* ”

Quickly she rises to her feet. Will she fly down the stairs ? Will she rush to the dear shelter of her mother’s arms ? No — she starts again upon her terrible



THE TERROR BY NIGHT

journey in spite of everything, stricken with fear though she is.

For at the top of the house, sitting on a chair all alone among the deserted rooms—all alone ! imagine her sufferings !—is a doll.

The beautiful “cupid’s-bow mouth” of the composition baby must surely, like the other babies, be crying aloud that supreme appeal of the weak : “Mother !”

The little girl believes she hears the cry. That is why she hurries on.

The hearts of mothers—even at the age of five—are very full of love !

.

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

IN THE AIR

5000 FEET UP

“PULL the lever, Fritz, and let the bomb go!”

“The bomb. . . . Yes, Werner!”

Fizzzz . . .

“*Hoch*, Werner! There it goes!”

.

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

“I hear an engine, Campistron !”

“So do I . . . here they come . . .
fire off your marbles !”

“Here they go—Fire !”

Fizzzz . . . Boom ! . . . Crack ! . . .

There is an outburst of firing—a rending
of beams and plaster—the crash of furniture
—a rain of splinters !

Then clouds of smoke . . . and shower
after shower of broken glass, till the sound
dies away in the distance.

THE INNOCENTS

Afterwards—dust.

And again all is silence.

Requiescat in pace Deo.



II

IN THE
OUTER
COURT

RADISH. *Mince !* This is a fine place ! Look
at the flowers, and the little path . . .
and the birds . . . see the birds !
Their wings brush against one's cheeks,
they really do ! Where do you think
we are, Campistron ?

CAMPISTRON. That's more than I can say.

The Parc Monceau, maybe !

RADISH. Don't you know the smell ? (*He
sniffs loudly.*) Oh, can't you smell it !

CAMPISTRON. No—what is it ?

RADISH. It's the smell there is at Mass !

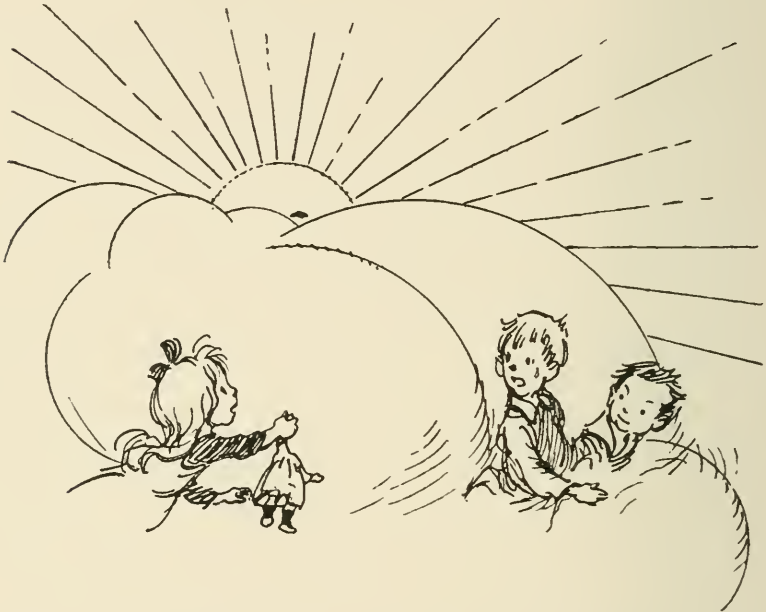
A SMALL VOICE IN THE DISTANCE. Hullo,
Radish ! Hullo, Campistron !

RADISH and CAMPISTRON (*surprised*). Who's
that calling ? (*They look behind them.*)

THE INNOCENTS

RADISH. Why, it's Fifi !

CAMPISTRON. What brings you here ?



FIFI (*holding up her doll, and speaking in a voice of despair*). Look ! The bomb did it ! It knocked off her head. My dolly—my poor dolly !

IN THE OUTER COURT

RADISH to CAMPISTRON. Oh, look at Fifi !

Her feet don't move at all ! *Mince !*
one would think she was flying !

CAMPISTRON. Well, that's queer ! And
look at yours—and—and mine too !
There's no mistake about it, we're all
flying !

RADISH (*suddenly struck by an idea*). When
people go to heaven, Campistron——

CAMPISTRON (*overwhelmed by the thought*).
Radish, old chap, fancy if we saw *le bon*
Dieu !

*(Fifi has joined them. With a gesture
like that of a baby in pain she points to
a large red hole in her temple.)*

FIFI (*simply*). It hurt me.

THE INNOCENTS

At this moment a sound of wailing breaks the silence. At first it is indistinct, but gradually it grows and swells, till the air is filled with lamentations. Radish, Campistron, and Fifi listen attentively.

RADISH. Do you hear that ?

CAMPISTRON. Someone is crying : that's certain.

FIFI. Indeed it sounds like ever so many unhappy people. . . .

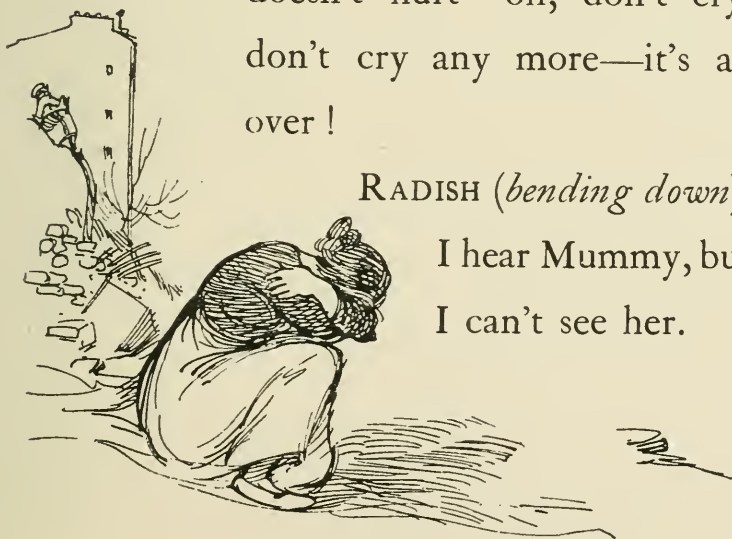
RADISH (*surprised*). Why, I hear my own name !

CAMPISTRON. And I hear mine ! (*Bewildered.*)
The voice is almost like——

FIFI. Like your mother's—yes, Campistron,

IN THE OUTER COURT

she's there—and yours too, Radish—
she's calling you—hush!—listen—oh!
there's my own dear Mummy calling
for me: 'Fifi! my Fifi! where are
you, my poor little Fifi?' Stop cry-
ing, little Mummy—it doesn't hurt
any more now—it's all over—it
doesn't hurt—oh, don't cry,
don't cry any more—it's all
over!



RADISH (*bending down*).

I hear Mummy, but

I can't see her.

THE INNOCENTS

FIFI. That's because the earth is so far away.

CAMPISTRON to FIFI. Here—don't go so fast! Why do you hold my hand and pull me along?

RADISH to FIFI. And me too—why are you pulling me?

FIFI. You must follow me: we are going up all the time, and I am lighter than you, because I have fewer sins.

CAMPISTRON to RADISH (*frowning*). We oughtn't to have put buttons in the poor-box in church.

RADISH (*a little uneasy*). Nor submarines made out of pen-trays into the holy water.

IN THE OUTER COURT

FIFI to RADISH. Hold my dolly for me. But
don't drop her—whatever happens, don't
drop her !



THE INNOCENTS

CAMPISTRON. Oh ! I say, you don't know what is happening to me ! I've got my feet on the backs of two doves—ever so soft ! My doves beat their wings, and carry me up with them !

RADISH. Let me see. (*He bends down.*)
Oh !

CAMPISTRON. What's the matter ?

RADISH. The white feathers of your doves——

CAMPISTRON. Well ?

RADISH. They're quite red !

CAMPISTRON (*simply*). Oh, that's the blood from my legs. That bomb ! It hurt me at the time, you know, but now I don't feel it the least bit—really and truly I don't.



FIFI LOOKING UPWARDS.

THE INNOCENTS

RADISH. I'm all right now too—but all the same, I was hit. Look here, Campistron—do you see this hole, this big hole? (*Nodding his head.*) Well, it was through there that my heart came out on to the ground.

FIFI (*who is looking upwards*). Oh, there are lots of little boys like you and little girls like me, and they are making signs to us!

RADISH and CAMPISTRON. Where? Where?

FIFI. Up there.

RADISH. *Mince!* they are leaning over the edge of a cloud. (*Making a trumpet of his hands, he calls out to them.*) Hullo!—look out, you people up there! Don't lean over so far or you'll fall down!

IN THE OUTER COURT

CAMPISTRON (*in the same way*). Who are you ?

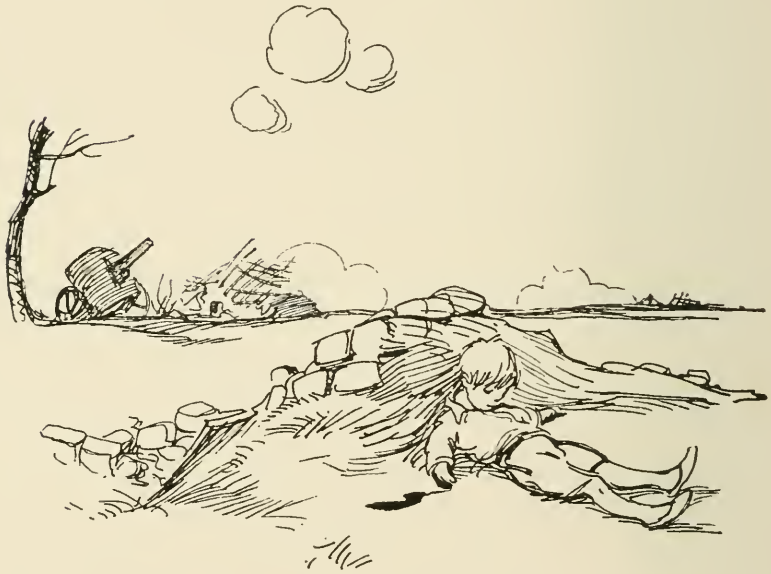
A HOST OF VOICES (*sighing and wailing*).

We are the children drowned in the Lusitania—the little Belgians, the little Serbs, the little Roumanians martyred in lying reprisals—the little English children murdered with bombs—little French children with hands cut off. We are the Innocents whom the hordes of Germany have basely slain, defiled, polluted, massacred. We are the child-martyrs of the War.



THE INNOCENTS

*Germany, mighty Germany, proud
Germany, may the curse of God be upon
your rulers for ever, to all Eternity !*



IN THE OUTER COURT

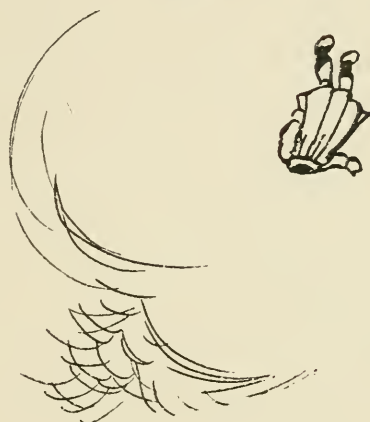
RADISH and CAMPISTRON

(*together*). Pah !

William's a beast !



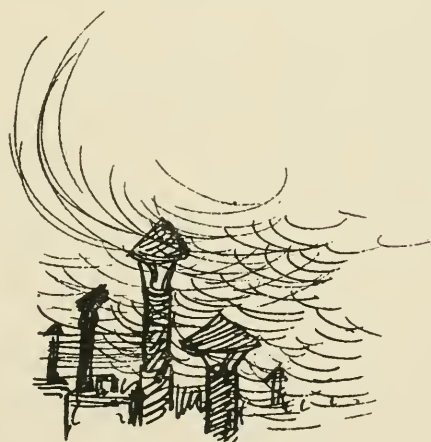
FIFI. We shall soon be there—give me my dolly.



RADISH. *Flûte !* I've lost it . . .

CAMPISTRON. There it goes — it's tumbling down to the earth !

RADISH (*crestfallen*). Dolls don't get up to Paradise all by themselves, that's certain.



THE INNOCENTS

A VOICE. Ah yes, they do, sometimes . . .
when the warm hearts of their little
mothers love them. . . . Fifi's doll is
not far off. It has fallen into a star. . . .
Quick ! where is a cherub to fetch it ?

(In the distance the beating of wings
is heard.)

*(Radish, Campistron, and Fifi are
breathless with astonishment. Before
them appears a tall old man, smiling.
He has a large key in his hand.)*

CAMPISTRON (*nudging* RADISH). Radish, look
at that gentleman, . . . he has the sun
on his head !

*(The old man bends down, takes Fifi in
his arms and lifts her to the level of his face.)*



HE HAS A LARGE KEY IN HIS HAND.

THE INNOCENTS

THE OLD MAN. *Parce Domine . . .*

(He kisses her.)

FIFI *(whose forehead, at the touch of that kiss, has become haloed with light)*. I do feel so happy !

(The old man puts his key into an invisible lock, and turns it slowly. He leans against some unseen obstacle. He takes a step forward, so the obstacle must have receded to that extent.

Very sweet music is heard, in waves, borne on a gentle breeze, with a scent of lilies and roses.)

CAMPISTRON *(spellbound)*. Gipsies !

IN THE OUTER COURT

THE OLD MAN to FIFI. As you are so small,
you can pass through this opening.
Go, my child.

Fifi goes forward and disappears suddenly.

RADISH (*in a low voice to CAMPISTRON, his eyes round with amazement*). Did you see? . . . Fifi . . . He has given her wings!

(The old man now pulls the key towards him with all his strength.)

CAMPISTRON (*surprised*). Why are you doing that, sir?

THE OLD MAN. I am shutting the door of Paradise.

THE INNOCENTS

THE TWO BOYS (*bewildered*). The door?

But where is your door?

THE OLD MAN (*with a smile*). Take three steps forward!

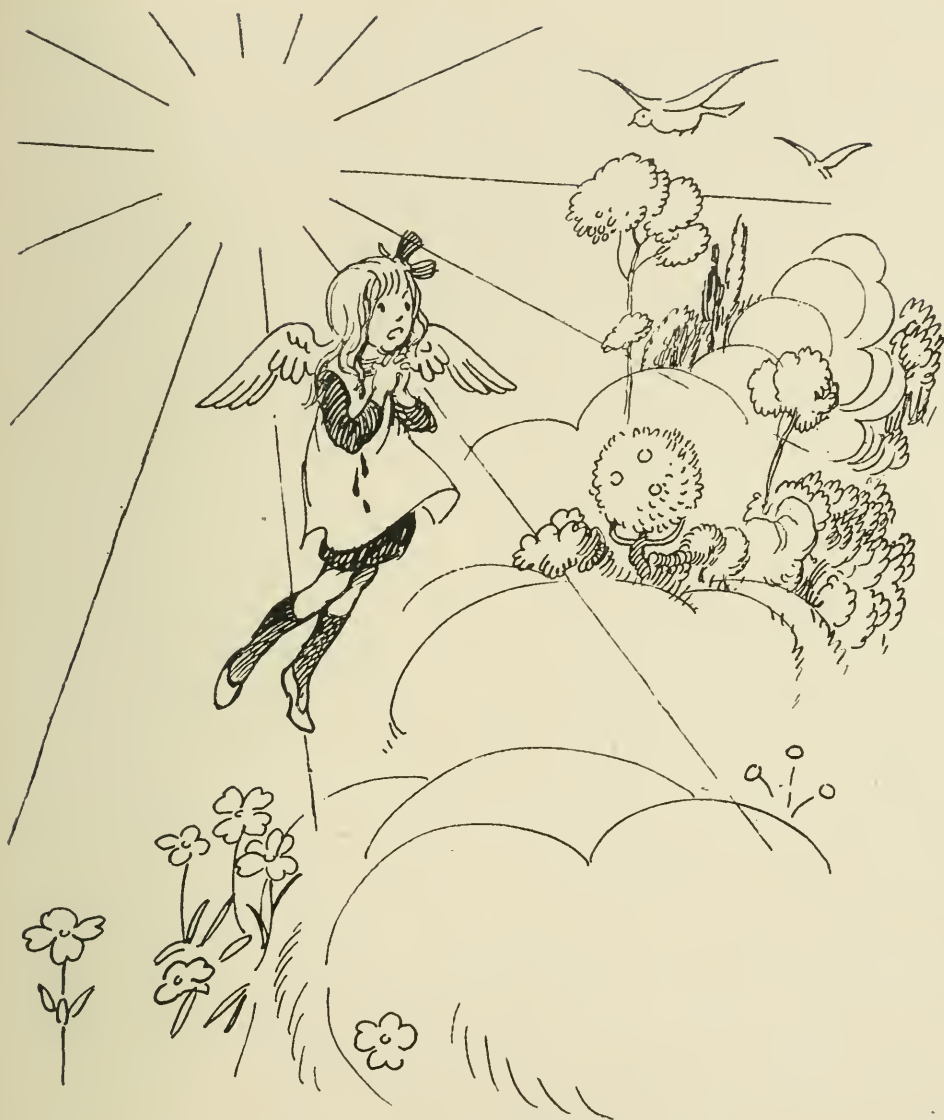
(RADISH and CAMPISTRON *obey.*

They flatten their noses against a transparent wall.)

RADISH. *Houille!* I didn't see it!

THE OLD MAN (*very solemnly, with his right hand raised*). That is because your eyes are not yet opened to the Light. . . . Your sins, like scales, make them blind. . . . You no longer see the Earth : you do not yet see Heaven. . . .

CAMPISTRON. Then, are we not to enter Paradise?



ARE WE NOT TO ENTER PARADISE?

THE INNOCENTS

THE OLD MAN. Not yet !

*(He stands for a moment in silent thought ;
then speaks with great earnestness.)*

Lord, I have here with me two little French boys from Paris : Jules Lambier, nicknamed Radish, aged eleven, and Bébert Campistron, of the same age, who humbly await Your Just Sentence.

A GREAT VOICE *(which fills the whole sky)*.

What have they done ?

THE OLD MAN *(reluctantly)*. Well . . .
well . . . many a sin !

CAMPISTRON *(quickly in an undertone to RADISH)*. Pocketing one's mother's sugar—is that a sin ?

RADISH *(rather pale)*. And I who cribbed my answers at school !

IN THE OUTER COURT

THE OLD MAN. But I must tell you, Lord,



that, young as they are, they died like
soldiers. They had climbed to the roof

THE INNOCENTS

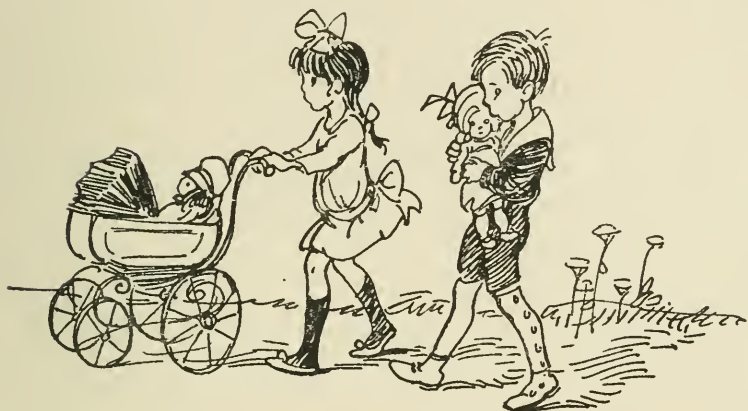
of their house. There they had placed a gun . . . oh ! you understand, Lord, the gun was just a harmless plaything made of wood and——

THE VOICE. And no device of men, however formidable, was ever so fatal to the power of Germany as that childish weapon. . . . Hitherto, upon the earth, little children have lived in the happiness of Innocence. Their souls were purer than My summer mornings, and the untroubled music of their laughter rose to My heart on the wings of My angels.

The life that lay before them was full of promise and hope : they were a link between earth and Heaven.

IN THE OUTER COURT

O William, eternally accursèd Emperor of the Germans, know that by letting loose upon the world your savage



hordes of soldiers you have stained the souls of My little ones. They have seen villages burning, towns in ruins, poor old men tortured, women shot, even when they themselves have not been the helpless victims of brutal murderers.

THE INNOCENTS

My lambs, My little lambs have been



sacrificed wholesale to your blood-
thirsty pride. . . .

Their innocent hearts, once filled

IN THE OUTER COURT

with Love, have been slowly poisoned with sinister thoughts of Vengeance and Hatred. . . . Their limpid eyes have been clouded with unchildlike feelings : the smiles have been wiped from their lips for ever. . . . Under quiet skies, whence the flights of happy birds were sometimes suddenly scattered by the shot of a sportsman's gun, their childhood has been turned to sadness. . . .

Wherefore these Innocents, who through your wickedness have learnt of the brutal reign of Force, have been taught to copy, in their games—to My infinite sorrow—the actions of murderers : to threaten people with their wooden swords, to aim at their mothers

THE INNOCENTS

with toy-pistols, and with their pitiful tin
guns to mow down companies, and regi-
ments, and whole armies
with imaginary grape-



shot. . . . Their baby lips that were made
for kisses have shouted murderous words,
and their very dreams are of blood !

William ! . . . William ! what have
you done to the souls of My little ones !



LORD, HAVE PITY ON THESE TWO.

THE INNOCENTS

THE OLD MAN. Lord, have pity on these two.

. . . A bomb, dropped from a Gotha,
slew them basely in the dark ! One of
them has mangled feet and his poor
little legs are broken. . . .

ANOTHER VOICE (*very gentle, very sweet, very
pitiful*). My Son, remember that Your
Feet were pierced. . . .

THE OLD MAN. One of the boy's hands,
Lord, has no fingers.

THE VERY GENTLE VOICE. My Son, re-
member Your Hands, which were crushed
by the blows of a mallet, and torn to
pieces by the weight of Your exhausted
Body. •

THE OLD MAN. His forehead is bleeding. . . .

IN THE OUTER COURT

THE SAME VOICE. My Son, remember Your crown of thorns.

THE OLD MAN. The other boy, Lord, has had his chest crushed, and his heart torn out through a gaping wound.

THE VOICE (*in which there is a hint of tears*).
My Son, think of his poor mother, who will raise him in her arms, and feel it only natural to hold him up to You !

At this moment the blue sky is darkened.

THE OLD MAN (*in a low voice to the children*).
The Virgin is weeping. . . .

THE GREAT VOICE OF JUDGMENT, THE VOICE OF GOD. Peter, give them the Kiss of Pardon and let them enter My Kingdom.

THE INNOCENTS

The old man, who is none other than St Peter, kisses Radish and Campistron on the forehead. Instantly great cries of joy and unutterable emotion burst from the lips of the boys.



This is because their eyes have been opened to the Light, and for them the Invisible has been filled with glory. They see Heaven itself, for St Peter has opened wide the heavy doors of the gateway.

IN THE OUTER COURT

And ah ! that Heavenly vision, how it fills them with delight ! . . . Often when they were still upon the earth, the day-dreams of these poor little urchins, imprisoned among smoky streets, in a gloomy house and a dark room, had been haunted by the naïve pictures in some book of adventures. They would turn the leaves for hours together, and sometimes, wearied by the emptiness of their lives, they would pore over these fantastic landscapes, these distant, very distant, visions of the Land of Faery. And in the silence their quickened, tremulous breathing was audible, and little hissing sounds of excitement as they drew in the air through their lips.



THE HEAVENLY VISION.

IN THE OUTER COURT

And now this Heaven is like those pictures !

Like them it is glowing with colour : there are mosaics of flowers on carpets of moss, trees like red plumes, an intricate tracery of silver streams, and winding paths of smooth, golden sand. . . . Deliciously ripe fruit hangs on bushes that make perpetual music, for they are alive with singing nightingales. And over all these things—above, below, to left, to right—there is a constant coming and going, and rising and falling, and whirling and fluttering of thousands and thousands of white butterflies, whose fragile, tremulous wings appear in some miraculous way to form this aerial landscape.

THE INNOCENTS

But at a sign from the Saint the butterflies are gradually transformed. Before the dazzled eyes of Campistron and Radish they become angels, and folding their wings alight gently on the ground, side by side. . . .

On a sudden everything vanishes: flowers, and soft grass, and streams, and paths. . . . There has been a snow-shower of white feathers. . . .

Then Peter takes the two children by the hand. He bids them lie upon this trembling mass of whiteness.

Then he makes a sign.

The angels move upwards.

In the sweetness and warmth and softness of their feathers they carry the quivering, bleeding forms of poor little Jules Lambier,

IN THE OUTER COURT

nicknamed Radish, and of his playmate Cam-
pistron, to God, the Father of us all.



III

THE HEAVEN OF LITTLE DEAD CHILDREN



THEN HE LAID HIS HANDS UPON THEM.

CAMPISTRON and Radish saw Our Father on His Throne, and Campistrone was ill at ease. A certain incident connected with a button in the poor-box filled him with remorse for his sins. But Our Father, Who saw the fear behind his troubled eyes, only smiled, and touched him with kind fingers that shone like the sun. Radish, thinking himself unobserved, whispered to Campistrone :

“Since He is so kind to you, ask Him for wings !”

Our Father heard him, and, laying aside His globe of blue and gold, said to the two children :

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“Come nearer to Me !”

Then He laid His Hands upon them :

“Go : your wish is granted.”

At the same instant Radish and Campistron felt that wings were growing on their shoulders.

“Oh, but how wonderful !” cried Radish.

Campistron, the bolder of the two, was the first to fly. But Radish, who was a little frightened, cried :

“*Hé !* don’t go so fast—I’m giddy !”

Campistron, however, was already soaring high in the air. He answered :

“Look at me ! I can beat the swallows at it !”



RADISH GREW ACCUSTOMED TO HIGH ALTITUDES.

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So Radish, little by little, grew accustomed to high altitudes ; and as his inseparable playmate Campistron assured him that the wind in one quarter smelt of caramel and almond cake, he followed in that alluring direction as fast as his wings would carry him, sniffing greedily with dilated nostrils.

Suddenly they found themselves above a vast plain where, round a gigantic table, thousands and thousands of children were seated. They at once recognised most of the faces of those who had so lately spoken to them from above the cloud.

A small voice called to them suddenly :

“ Radish, Campistron, come down here ! ”

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Radish said proudly to Campistron, who was also feeling much flattered :

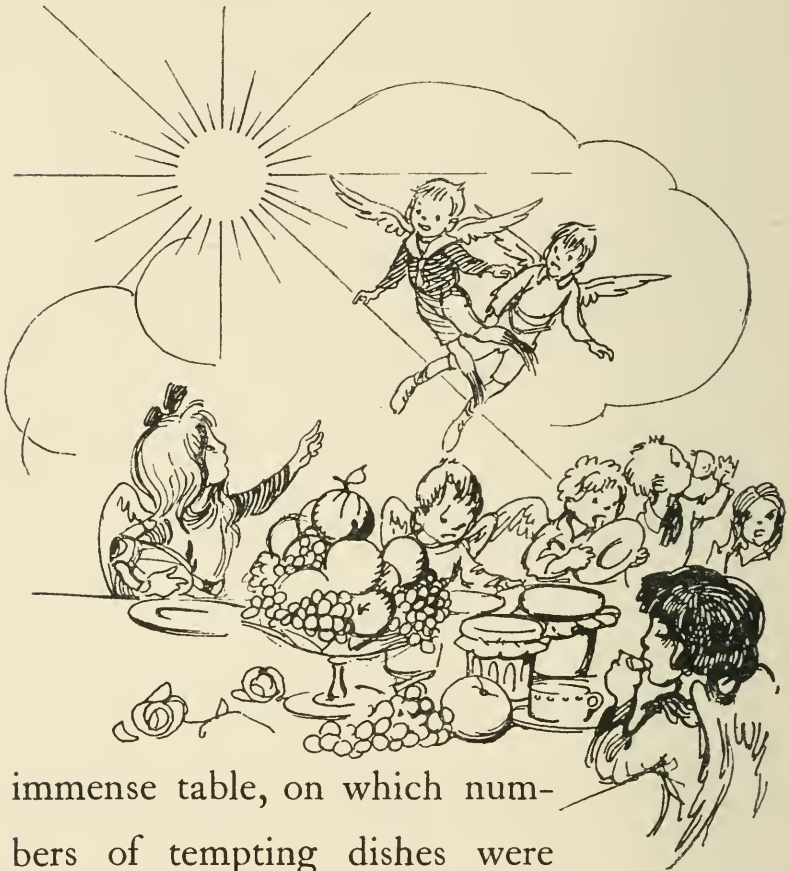
“ You see, old chap, they know us even in Paradise ! ”

But when they alighted on the plain they were forced to change their note a little, for they saw Fifi seated at the table, making energetic signs to them to come and speak to her.

“ Radish ! Campistron ! you are expected,” she cried at the top of her voice, “ and we’re eating ever such good things ! Come quick ! There’s plenty of jam ! ”

So they, too, sat down close to Fifi at the

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immense table, on which numbers of tempting dishes were displayed. Fifi began by announcing, with childish but heartfelt delight, and an air of great mystery :

HEAVEN OF LITTLE CHILDREN

“ You know . . . I’ve got her safe ! ”

“ What ? ”

“ My dolly . . . she was brought back to me ! ”

And she showed it to them, sitting close beside her, in a fold of her blood-stained dress.

“ She’s hungry ! ” added Fifi, holding up the stiff, unbending arms of composition, which gave a greedy impression of wanting the whole table.

But Campistron wrinkled up his nose doubtfully.

“ H’m,” he muttered. “ She’s lost her head, so where will you find her mouth ? ”

“ Oh, dear ! ” sighed Fifi. “ That’s true ! ”

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She began to cry softly, at the thought that her little girl had lost her mouth and would perhaps be hungry, on that account, for all Eternity.

Some voices were whispering :

“Those are some little Parisians from the Faubourg de la Légalité. . . . They were killed by a bomb . . . the little fat one has broken legs, but it is the other one whose heart is gone.”

And other voices, again and again, repeated the words like a sad, haunting echo :

“His heart is gone . . . his heart is gone . . . his heart is gone . . .”

Then Radish and Campistron looked at those who, like themselves, were seated round



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the table. Everywhere they saw livid faces, hollow eyes framed in purple shadows, and bloodless lips contorted with pain. . . . Locks of hair, stiff with blood, hung over shattered temples ; foreheads and cheeks were gashed with sword-cuts, chins had been wounded with bullets, noses were broken, and ears had been dexterously cut off with some murderous weapon. Nearly all the children drooped their heads sideways with a weary air of helplessness and weakness, rather like a dying bird. . . .

Radish and Campistron also saw, in the arms of little girls, some tiny babies ; and when they wondered aloud over this, a boy, who had no visible wounds but whose eyes

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had been eaten by crabs at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, explained to them :



“ The babies were killed in their mothers’ arms while they were flying before the invasion ! ”

The clothes of these innocent victims were

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those that they had worn at the time of their murder : the fine velvet and lace collars and silk trimmings of rich children : the plain cotton frocks and shabby cloth trousers, the black calico schoolroom pinafores and thick hobnailed boots, of poor little townsfolk : the fustian petticoats, knitted shawls, sun-bonnets, and little wooden sabots of peasant children—all the child-life of the world was represented there.

And all these luxurious or shabby clothes still showed the traces of the children's martyrdom : of the dusty roads of exile, the salt of sea-water, the mud of devastated fields, the stain of tears and blood—above all, of blood, clotted and brown.



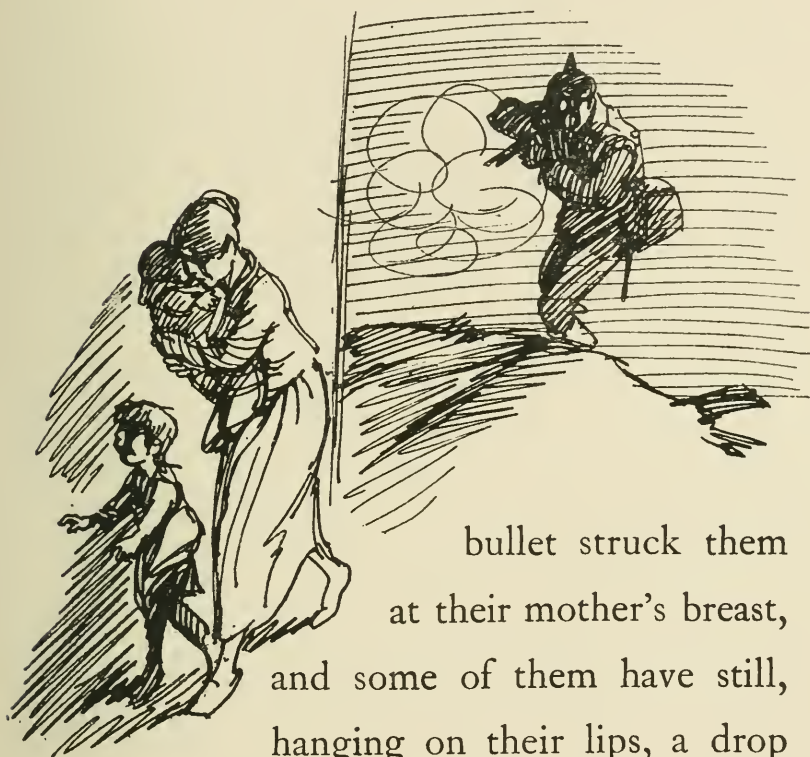
THE PROCESSION.

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Ah, William, what a procession will file past your deathbed, when your closing eyes are already aware of the other side of Life ! . . . What a procession ! For one by one they will all pass before you, these little bleeding phantoms that the Justice of God reserves for your last moments. One by one ! In vain, once puissant Emperor, shall you seek the remotest corner in the depths of your strongest fortress ; in vain shall you multiply guards and sentries at your gates ; in vain surround your death-bed with your haughtiest nobles and your roughest soldiers—you will see them, William, believe me, you will see them !

HEAVEN OF LITTLE CHILDREN

The little babies will come first. A



bullet struck them
at their mother's breast,
and some of them have still,
hanging on their lips, a drop
of milk that has become a drop of blood.
The little boys will follow in crowds, and
will dumbly show you their sores, their

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wounds, their mutilated limbs. Will you not tremble with fear when you meet their



shadowed, sunken eyes? And what will you say when Jules Lambier bends over

HEAVEN OF LITTLE CHILDREN

you, bends very close to you, William, and shows you his gaping chest wherein there is no heart ?

And then the little girls will come. They were the sweetness and charm of our lands.

In the evenings they sang lullabies to their dolls on the thresholds of our homes, and their clear eyes showed the promise of love.

Now their eyes do not shine, their mouths are dumb. Some of them, young as they are —there is one who



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is only five—have the faces of careworn old women, and their little hands are still clenched in the effort to defend the pure bodies that your soldiers have defiled.

Every one of them, I swear to you, one by one, will bend over your death-bed, and bespattered with their blood you will appear before God !

Fifi, Radish, and Campistron had eaten their fill of every dish. There was a particular kind of honey, more golden than sunshine in July, which gave them great ecstasy. Fifi's little paws were sticky with it. As for Campistron, he was plastered with it up to his

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hair, and Radish, with a joyous chuckle, declared that "it was stickier than *roudoudou*."

And then the angels came. They took the children by the hand, and carried them away on quick wings to a great blue room, all hung with comets and stars. From the ceiling the moon, held in a diamond globe, poured down her silver light.



EVERY EVENING.

IV

E V E R Y

EVENING

IN this room there were thousands of little white beds : in short, it was a dormitory. But it was a dormitory larger than the largest dormitory in the largest school in the world.

And what soft and cosy beds ! All the cherubs in the heavens, it would seem, must have generously given a feather from their wings to fill the pillows and mattresses and bolsters, and to make the thick eiderdown-quilts so soft and warm.

Fifi, Radish, and Campistron, and all the other children, were put to bed.

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Campistron cried gaily :

“ *Mince!* but it’s soft ! I can snuggle right down into the mattress ! ”

Fifi sighed, a sigh of content.

“ It’s nicer than the grass on the forts ! ”

But Radish never said a word. He purred like a cat, instead.

Their three beds nearly touched one another. By stretching out their arms they could hold each other’s hands, and as they felt no more pain in their poor torn bodies they were very peaceful and happy—oh, so happy !

Presently a woman appeared. In the dim light her face was invisible. She looked very tall and had an air of great dignity. She paused

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at one of the beds, bent over it, remained a moment, and then passed on to another,



where perhaps she stayed a little longer. Then she visited a third, and a fourth.

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When she reached the tenth, Radish and Campistron, who were watching her with intense interest over the edge of their quilts, spoke to one another :

“ Do you know who it is ? ”

“ No ; do you ? ”

When she reached Fifi's bed the two boys thought they heard a joyous cry from the little girl :

“ Oh, it's Mummy ! my little Mummy ! ”

And the sound of two long kisses followed. For a long time the woman leant over the bed. Her face was hidden : only her hair could be seen, for her mouth was lingering to give some of its warmth to the ice-cold throat of the little laughing girl.

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At last the woman rose, and turned to Campistron. Campistron started, and gazed at her in bewilderment. His eyes grew round :



his lips parted : he whispered : “ Mammy ! oh Mammy ! ” And as the woman came near to put her arms round him he stammered excitedly : “ Is it really you ? ”

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In a low voice she answered : “ Yes.”

Meanwhile Radish, lying on his back in the shadow, was waiting.

Why did the woman stay so long beside Campistron’s bed, and what was she whispering to him so softly ? He closed his eyes, to avoid being distracted by the things about him, and to concentrate his attention on the words that were passing between those two, so near him, at the next bed. Then a voice he knew well, and recognised instantly, made him tremble with a great hope. That voice would have made his heart swell with unutterable happiness, if he had not left it somewhere down there upon the earth, among the ruins of a house.

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“ *C'est moman . . . c'est moman . . .* ”

He opened his eyes, said “ *Oh!* ”—that was all—and, throwing off the bedclothes, lifted his arms and took the gentle face that bent over him between his mangled, bleeding hands.

“ Mammy—my Mammy ! Oh, Mammy dear, won't you *cosset* me ? ”

So the woman “ cosseted ” him : that is to say, she laid her cheek against the cheek of this tender-hearted child and mingled her hair with his. Then, in a low voice quite close to his ear she murmured simple words of mother-love, the words that soothe all happy children to sleep.

She stole softly away, and from every

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bed over which she leaned the voice of a child, awakened suddenly, cried :

“ It’s Mummy ! ”

And now silence and peace reign in Paradise. The distant angels are no longer singing. Even the beating of their wings is still.

The woman bows her head low, very low—no doubt that she may be still nearer



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to the Heart of all sorrowing Mothers,—and
makes this promise :

“ In very truth, my sisters, every evening
to soothe them to sleep I shall have your
loving voices and your songs. Yes, your own

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songs, for I know them all, even those that you make yourselves sometimes, when your hearts sing in memory of your own childhood, with its lullabies and fairy-tales.

“ Every evening . . .

“ I shall stroke their pillows to make them more comfortable, I shall blow softly away from their moist foreheads the disturbing little lock of rebellious hair, and with a caressing finger I shall feel for the soft fold of pink flesh at their necks, above the plump shoulders.

“ Every evening . . .

“ If they are afraid of the darkness and the strange noises in the shadows, they need only hold out their trembling little hands



THE DREAM.

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to me. My firm, protecting hand will lead them to the Blue Land of Quiet Sleep.

“ Every evening . . .

“ I shall draw up the sheets and arrange



EVERY EVENING

them comfortably, and replace the quilt carefully over the bare limbs of restless little boys, to keep them from the cold. And if there should be nervous little girls who wake in the night and call for ‘*Maman!*’ my kiss will quickly calm their fears.

“Every evening . . .

“Everything shall be the same for them. Their lives shall be memories of you. They will believe themselves always your beloved children. In very truth, my sisters, I promise you that through all the centuries yet to be fulfilled they shall find you in my smile and in my eyes.

“Every evening . . . every evening . . . every evening.”

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The Paradise of Germany's child-victims is asleep. There is no sound but the rhythmical rise and fall of their light breathing.

With a finger on her lips, Mary, the Virgin Mother, signs to her angels to guard their sleep.

A. M.

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